



Texas Department of Transportation

Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee Quarterly Report



July 2003

International Relations Office

Introduction

The Land Transportation Standards Subcommittee (LTSS) was created under the auspices of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The primary goal of the LTSS is to examine the land transportation regulatory regimes of Mexico, Canada and the United States, and work toward their harmonization.

As directed by Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 78, adopted by the 74th Legislature of the State of Texas, the following is the quarterly report on the progress of the LTSS and its related groups. This report has been prepared by the International Relations Office of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and covers the quarter ending June 30, 2003.

This report begins with a summary of general LTSS and related activities. The sections that follow include activities of each of the LTSS Working Groups and Transportation Consultative Working Groups (TCGs). Please note that some groups have completed their mandates and are therefore not listed in this report.

The information in this report was provided by the U.S. Working Group chairs and other U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) officials, as well as published reports and information obtained from Mexican officials. The initial report, issued in September 1995, contains background material that will not be repeated here. To obtain a copy of that report or others, please contact the Texas legislative library or the TxDOT International Relations Office (IRO) at (512) 374-5345. This report and previous editions are also available on the web at www.dot.state.tx.us/iro. Additional information on previous LTSS-related work group activities is available at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Summary of General LTSS and Related Activities

Background information:

In November, 2002 the moratorium on granting operating authority to Mexican motor carriers was modified. The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration was directed to act on the 130 applications from the Mexican domiciled truck and bus companies seeking to transport international cargo in cross-border services in the U.S. or to provide regular route services between Mexico and the U.S. Mexican carriers and drivers are required to meet the same standards and requirements as U.S. operators. Modifying the moratorium implements the truck and bus provisions of NAFTA and will open the way to expanded Mexican truck and bus operations in the U.S.

Summary of LTSS Working Group Activities

On May 28-29, 2003 the LTSS plenary meeting took place in San Antonio, Texas. Much progress has been made by subcommittees and working groups, as reported below.

Working Group 1: Driver and Vehicle Standards and Supervision of Motor Carrier Compliance (LTSS#1)

U.S. Chair: Tom Kozlowski, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

Consensus was that much has been accomplished by this group. An agreement was reached to prepare a report defining work completed so far. A recommendation was made for this group's work to be folded into the ongoing work of the Working Group on Cross- Border Operations and Facilitation (TCG#1)

Working Group 2: Vehicle Weights and Dimensions (LTSS#2)

U.S. Chair: Jim March, Federal Highway Administration

The Vehicle Weights and Dimensions group produced two reports: A side-by-side comparison of weights and dimension limits in the three countries and a report on performance criteria that can be used to consider potential performance and suitability of future changes in vehicle weights and dimensions in the 3 countries.

The work group created its 2003 Work Plan, highlights include:

1. Convening a meeting of the Working Group in Phoenix, Arizona in November to discuss progress on activities
2. Continuing to identify and discuss issues related to harmonization of vehicle weights and dimensions
3. Exploring feasibility of establishing annual stakeholder meetings

4. Facilitating meetings to remove regional impediments to regulations that hinder safe and productive motor vehicle transportation
5. Identifying and seeking to resolve issues related to specific types of commercial motor vehicles such as intercity motor coaches and auto transporters
6. Establishing a technical group to consider issues surrounding the more widespread adoption of super single tires on motor vehicles
7. Updating the side-by-side comparison of weights and dimension limits in Canada, Mexico and the U.S.
8. Developing a brochure showing the minimum weights and dimensions for the common motor vehicle configurations operating in international commerce between Canada, Mexico and U.S.
9. Revising and updating the draft Safety Performance Criteria
10. Continuing to provide a forum for the exchange of information related to vehicle weights and dimensions

Working Group 5: Hazardous Materials Standards (LTSS#5)

U.S. Chair: Robert Richard, Research and Special Programs Administration

The Hazardous Materials Standards group reports that it provides a valuable forum for allowing NAFTA countries to exchange information about domestic dangerous goods transport regulations. Additionally the group offers an opportunity to deal with amendments and issues regarding the U.N. Model Regulations for the Transport of Dangerous Goods.

The group is continuing its efforts to create a North American Model Standard (NAMS) for the transport of dangerous goods in particular related to regulations specific to rail and road transport. They further intend to reformat the NAMS in the form of a model standard for road and rail regulations.

They created and distributed the Emergency Response Guidebook, a collaborative effort between US Department of Transportation, Transport Canada and the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation of Mexico (SCT). This document has been widely solicited and published in more than twelve languages.

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Summary of Transportation Consultative Group Activities

Transportation Consultative Group 1: Cross Border Operations and Facilitation (TCG#1)

U.S. Chair: Maria C. Lameiro, U.S. Department of Transportation

The Cross Border Operations and Facilitation group is in the process of finalizing a paper describing its scope of work.

They reported that the IRP member jurisdictions have approved an amendment to the IRP agreement to facilitate Mexican Government eligibility for a full participation in the plan and additionally, that IFTA members have taken a similar action. On July 9th, an ad hoc trilateral committee on IRP and IFTA intends to continue discussion of participation by Mexican motor carriers in these programs.

The group further planned to undertake periodic updating of motor carrier operations handbooks.

Following a discussion about U.S. insurance coverage for Mexican motor carriers, the group planned to request insurance regulators in the NAFTA countries to schedule a trilateral ad hoc government-industry insurance meeting to work on this issue.

Finally, the work of TCG#1 and LTSS#1 will continue to be carried out in joint session. This group met in Mexico City on April 18, 2003. They began to revise their mandate and develop priorities for future work.

Transportation Consultative Group 2: Rail Safety and Economic Issues (TCG#2)

U.S. Chair: Jane Bachner, Federal Railroad Administration

At the plenary session, the U.S. reported on rulemakings related to cross-border rail operations to include: Drug and Alcohol testing, Event Recorder Crashworthiness, Locomotive Cab Noise, Reflectorization of Rail Equipment and Train Horns.

Mexico reported on their current psycho-physical testing program for transport workers and changes planned in the area of drug and alcohol testing. Discussion ensued about options for drug and alcohol testing for Canadian and Mexican crews crossing the U.S. border and the U.S. agreed to consider these options in developing final regulations.

Harmonization of regulations was discussed and Mexico planned to review the list of regulations for impact.

Mexico reported on an internal review of border rail crossings. The group discussed consistency of application of regulation and inspection procedures at border rail crossings. It was agreed that all countries would review their procedures in various locales within the next 6 months. Mexico and the U.S. planned to conduct joint inspections at border locations and cross-train inspectors in their respective procedures.

The U.S. briefed the group on high failure rates for truck bolsters on rail cars in the North American fleet, and reported that steps are being taken to increase testing and replacement.

Transportation Consultative Group 3: Automated (Electronic) Data Exchange (TCG#3)

U.S. Chair: Angie Sebastian, Federal Highway Administration

The Automated Data Exchange group reported that they will continue to work independently but will be meeting with TCG#1 and LTSS#1 periodically for the purpose of information sharing.

In relation to driver information, Mexico reported updating and making this available on a regular basis to the U.S. and Canada. Mexico further is requesting the same from the U.S. However, this information is not kept at the federal level in the U.S., hence the group agreed to consult with IRP to determine how to best respond to Mexico's request.

Finally, Mexico reported having provided the U.S. with information on 4,000 U.S. drivers and vehicles that had been cited for violations in Mexico.

TCG Group 4: Science and Technology (TCG#4)

U.S. Chair: Richard Biter, U.S. Department of Transportation

This group defined outcomes to be achieved as follows:

1. Create a workshop (to be incorporated into an existing event) related to coordination of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture developments, including harmonization of critical features and attributes.
2. Sponsor an ITS workshop to analyze each country's ITS architecture and general ITS applications
3. Meet to evaluate and update 5 year work plan to include ITS security systems and strategies, workforce training and skill needs.
4. Canada and the U.S. will develop a paper on opportunities for Mexico to become more active in ISO TC203.
5. Each country will produce documentation identifying resources, with links, on transportation R&D.

TCG Group 5: Maritime and Port Policy (TCG#5)

U.S. Chair: Gregory Hall, Maritime Administration

At the LTSS plenary meeting, this group discussed maritime security requirements being generated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the U.S. The group reviewed the International Ship and Port Security Code (ISPS) requirements of the amended Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) convention and the Maritime Transportation Security Act.

After reviewing the current global efforts being undertaken to rewrite the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 108 on Seafarer's Identity Documents, the three countries agreed to create a new secure document that establishes positive and identifiable identification of seafarers.

The group also agreed to explore the feasibility of enhancing information exchange capabilities between countries, and posited the use of the web for this purpose.